

Project: History On High Tech
Lead Applicant: Peggy Coleman, Steuben County Conference & Visitors Bureau

Explore NY Grant Program Application

Lead Applicant/Potential Grantee: Steuben County Conference
& Visitors Bureau
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Partners: Ontario County Tourism, Steuben County CVB

Project Title: History on High Tech

Project Summary: The theme of this project is historic sites and local cultural attractions within the Finger Lakes region, most specifically located within Ontario and Steuben counties. The project will highlight these historic and architectural gems using new technology such as podcasts, cell phone tours, and geocaching, adding a new dimension to the historic experience. The tourism promotion agencies will be the primary partners in the project, but we foresee additional participation from up to six different municipalities representing more than 35 historic sites and venues with unique architectural assets. Among the interested communities are Canandaigua, Honeyoye Falls (Monroe County), Corning, Victor, Hammondsport, Geneva, and Bath.

There are several reasons that we have selected a cultural theme. Primarily, we know we have a great product to market to potential visitors. Both of the counties involved in this project have significant historic sites and unique architectural assets, such as The Patterson Inn, a living history museum complex in Corning and Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Site in Canandaigua, which packaged together will stimulate even greater interest. By creating this project we are able to provide an affordable and creative solution to our communities' needs to increase visitation to the historic sites as well as expose these sites to an expanded audience.

The program will market multiple attractions and events, grouping them in a passport/trail format that encourages visitors to explore our counties for longer periods of time, generating overnight stays in our hotels, motels, B&Bs and inns.

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Research indicates that arts and cultural travelers spend more than the average visitor, yielding a bigger return on our investment, which is another important reason we selected this theme. In addition, the arts and cultural traveler fits the demographic of the visitors we know are already attracted to our counties – those with a household income of \$75,000+, 35-60 years old, traveling with two or more adults, usually without children, with a female member of the household most likely making the travel decisions (D.K. Shifflet, Randall Travel Marketing, Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance studies). By adding contemporary technology components this project will expand our share of this lucrative market into a younger demographic.

This new county partnership will strengthen and enhance our individual promotional initiatives, giving visitors more reasons to stay in the region. A packaging product that encourages overnight stays and ease of booking will be developed as part of the project. We see the fact that our counties are not adjacent as a potential advantage in this promotion. As visitors experience beautiful drives through the Finger Lakes, travel times will still be reasonable, but overnight stays almost a necessity to see all of the area attractions.

The podcasts, cell phone tour content, and geocaching activities will also give us new material that is easily spread to expanded audiences through viral and social marketing channels such as RSS feeds, iTunes, blogging and Facebook/MySpace integration. Our public relations initiatives will hopefully result in editorial promotion of the historic sites and unique architectural assets, events, and lodging packages.

In addition to marketing to consumers, we will promote our new use of these technology tools for historic sights and unique cultural assets to business media to show the tourism industry's adoption of and use of these tools in a competitive marketplace.

We plan to run the project year round, with a stronger marketing emphasis on shoulder-season and off-season visitation. Once the infrastructure is in place and the initial project is tested for return on investment, we will then determine the capability to expand the number of sites in the next phase.

SECTION 1: Key Objectives

Key Objectives:

1. Develop a new method to drive visitation to historic sites and unique architectural assets
2. Expose a younger demographic to these sites to expand the visitor demographic
3. Link the historic sites and unique architectural assets to create a larger product offering
4. Increase overnight visitation, especially in shoulder and off season months
5. Develop a library of modern technology messages which can be used for quick response to social media and new media inquiries.
6. Create a larger online footprint for the region.

Measurable Outcomes:

1. Develop and implement podcasts, cell phone tours, and geocache sites by August 31, 2008
2. Review visitor demographic data collected against current visitor profile for age shift by May 31, 2009
3. Develop and deliver a minimum of 12 overnight packages by July 15, 2008.
4. Track historic package purchases for return on investment by June 30, 2009.
5. Measure the use and adoption of the various technologies deployed, including analysis of the consumer demographics and psychographics with the highest propensity for adoption of this technology
6. Applying these new techniques where appropriate to our other niche markets.
7. Measure media impressions and coverage of our innovative project and our position of leadership in this category.

Target Audience:

1. Primary Target - college educated adults, mostly couples, with a household income of \$55,000+ living within a 500 mile driving radius.
2. Secondary Target – young couples, families
3. Tertiary Market – business related, technology related media

Supporting Research: D.K. Shifflet; Randall Travel Marketing, Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance studies; Hall & Partners Research for I Love NY

Section 2: Partnerships

The Steuben County Conference & Visitors Bureau and Ontario County Tourism will be the primary partners collaborating on this effort to market historic sites and unique architectural assets in our counties.

The Steuben County CVB will serve as the lead applicant for this project and will be responsible for the administration of the project. The Steuben County CVB will be responsible for all aspects of the day-to-day administration of the program, for the preparations and submission of required reports and preparation of cost estimate of the entire program.

Ontario County Tourism and Steuben County Conference and Visitors Bureau will share equally all aspects of developing and implementing the project. Each county tourism promotion agency will contribute \$5,000 to the project for a total local share investment of \$10,000.

The partners will hold monthly meetings to move the program forward and conference calls as needed. We will end each meeting with a checklist of items to be accomplished and follow-up on a regular basis to insure deadlines are met.

Section 3: Summary of Project Concepts

The Travel Industry Association of America annually offers a very valuable conference at which tourism promoters are connected with tourism, economic and market researchers to reveal the trends of our industry, the profiles and demands of our consumers (the traveling public), and the opportunities which exist for us to seize opportunities by connecting this information in presenting our product in a competitive manner. Both Steuben County and Ontario County were represented there and both realized that we need to approach our product presentation in a very unique way to meet the needs of the new consumer and remain competitive. Here are three references from the Travel Marketing Outlook Forum which are the basis of our **History on High Tech** project.

Reference #1.

We are living in the third screen world – or moving quickly to it. What is the third screen world? That of PDA's, cell phones, and other handheld devices as information resources. The old "worlds" are: 1st screen – TV; 2nd screen – your computer.

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Today. Mobility rules. Do you know that more people now have a cell phone than have a land line? 2006 was the year where cell phone use leapt over land line use. Stat: 14% have a cell phone, but do not have a land line. 12% have a land line but no cell phone.

Concept Result: Our project is about mobility. Take your cell phone, take your PDA, take your iPod, take your GPS and have fun with your high tech toys, exploring our history!

Reference #2.

Quoting from Peter Yesawitch, a highly regarded economist and tourism trend presenter, “ ... as prices become more transparent, brand clarity and clarity of experience becomes more important” Experience is where it's at!

Concept Result 1: Unfortunately historical attractions which have not upgraded their displays have suffered attendance losses as a result. Today's consumer is demanding when it comes to experience. Look and don't touch are no longer acceptable. We want our visitors to brag about their experience with History on High Tech. Why will they brag – because they can do it their way and it's unique. Our History on High Tech is also high on clarity of experience. We know they will tell their friends – and speaking of telling others –

Concept Result 2: Word of Mouth. 80% of the people who have a positive experience with something will report it to their friends. Certainly, as people run into the “podcasters”, “cell phone users” and other participants in the Third Screen World , they will want to know “what is going on”... “Why are those people standing in front of the exterior airplane at the Glenn Curtiss Museum and listening to their cell phone?” The uniqueness of this experience will “spread”.

Reference #3

Two additional trends that have been identified at the Outlook Forum that helped form the basis of History on High Tech:

1. High tech will be stylish
2. There is a heightened level of corporate social responsibility

High tech being stylish takes no more backup than looking around you. How “cool” is it to be using these new technologies? Families are adopting them as tools that they can share. Over 45% of the people on MySpace are over the age of 45. Technology is losing it's age barriers.

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Concept Result: We're cool too, because our History is presented on High Tech. We believe that this innovative, holistic approach to high tech will be very attractive to business and marketing media and as they profile our use of technology in this innovative manner, they will also be profiling our unique history and cultural assets. Our approach has a place on TIA's soon to be released industry website on social marketing benchmarks. The profile that we can gain as innovators will also reap awards for our State and leadership.

More and more businesses are looking for ways to reduce their carbon footprint. The last trend that plays in to our concept is one of social responsibility. This program is a dual winner in that regard. Businesses, including our industry, are looking at everything they do and its impact on the environment. Additionally, businesses want to contribute to sustainable tourism. They want to make sure that there is a heightened appreciation of the unique culture of an area and that this culture is respected and preserved. Our benefit is a model towards sustainability in tourism.

Concept Result 1: Technology marketing results in less impact on the environment. We only plan on printing one piece of collateral for this project. The rest of our delivery is "high tech."

Concept Result 2: Sustainable tourism is a result of interpreting an area's culture. What better way to build a respect for our architecture or our unique "days in history" than by allowing someone to hear about it, see it, make an attachment to it. When you stand in front of the Ontario County courthouse, turn on that video iPod and see a 90 second podcast about what happened in that building nearly 100 years ago when Susan B. Anthony was tried for treason for voting, you have a whole new appreciation for that story and that building. You'll know that Susan B. Anthony probably stood right where you did. History on High Tech makes history come to life in a new way.

Section 4: Marketing Plan & Timeline

Website – The website will contain content specific to the program with attraction, event, recreation, dining, shopping, lodging, and travel resource information available as well as ready-to-buy packages to facilitate ease of booking. Also, this site will offer the downloadable podcast and the link to the 'trailhead' for the Geocaching coordinates. Each county will feature a "History on High Tech" button on their individual web sites that will link directly to the web site.

Audio/Visual – 90 second audio recordings will be created for each participating historic site or unique architectural asset for use in the cell phone tours. In addition, audio podcasts will be scripted and recorded with the option to incorporate still images for mp4 format.

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Online/Digital Marketing – To leverage the viral nature of podcasts, we will create both mp3 and mp4 format podcasts and feed them to viral marketing channels including, but not limited to, YouTube, Facebook, and MySpace. A Megacache event posting on geocaching.com will be created to kick off the project. An event will be created on event.live.com to leverage the permission based email list that both counties currently have. The event.live.com site will also offer community experience functionality, such as discussion forums and shared photo galleries. Search engine marketing will be implemented as well.

Collateral – A trail map/passport identifying the various historic sites and unique architectural assets of the counties will be created to help guide visitors to the various points. In addition, “I Love NY History” Travel Bugs will be given to all visitors as an added value to the experience. The visitors can keep the bug as a souvenir or hide it in a cache in their home towns, potentially increasing exposure and traffic to the blogs and website.

PR – Our public relations program will focus on obtaining editorial placements promoting the “History on High Tech” project. The program will include the production and distribution of themed press releases, press kits, mailings, press visitations and related costs.

Infrastructure – While we realize that the infrastructure component is not an eligible expense under the Explore NY program, it is an integral part to the success of our project. Cache boxes, cache stickers and “treasure caches” will be secured and deployed at the various historic sites and unique architectural assets throughout our counties, with installation emphasis placed on current cell phone dead zones.

Advertising – Strategic print and online advertising will be placed to promote the project in affinity publications such as National Geographic.com and Preservation Magazine.

Research - A conversion study will be completed to determine if our project goals have been achieved.

Timeline –

May 2008

Confirm historic sites and unique architectural asset partner participation

Confirm technology vendors

June 2008

Create, submit for approval, and record scripts for cell phone tours and podcasts

Work with partners to build unique packages, e.g. – “Learn in a Landmark”

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July 2008

Build website
Deploy SEM
Develop Trail Map/Passport

August – mid September 2008

Launch website
Build and activate event page
Create and activate MegaCache event invitation
Develop media kits/story pitches
Design and place advertising

October 2008 – May 2009

PR campaign
Launch Project

April 2009

Work with researchers to develop conversion survey

May-June 2009

Implement conversion study

Section 5: Budget

Marketing Activity	Total Budget	Explore NY Grant
Advertising		
- Print Media	\$6,000	
-Online/Digital	\$4,000	\$1,500
-Radio, Television		
Collateral	\$4,000	\$2,000
Mailing		
Travel Show/Info Center		
Sales Meetings/Events and Fam Tours		
Customer Response		
Website creation	\$5,000	\$2,500
Audio/Visual	\$4,000	\$2,000
Research/Analysis	\$2,000	\$1,000
Public Relations	\$2,000	\$1,000
Infrastructure	\$1,000	
Total	\$28,000	\$10,000

Sources of funding for 1:1 required match:

Ontario County Tourism	\$5,000
Steuben County CVB	<u>\$5,000</u>
TOTAL Match	\$10,000